

The Present of Presence

As we start to look at the advent season, we are struck with the fact that God puts Himself in a place to relate to us. It's not us climbing a mountain or achieving great things to get His attention – He makes Himself available to us.

It's interesting- God foretold that He would make himself available.

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 7:14 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel

A couple of things here.

The passage is about the people of God, The house of David or the Jews, not being who they are supposed to be. So God is going to use a sign to teach them.

A pretty amazing sign- a virgin having a kid. Now we know that isn't the way it works but God is capable of changing how things work to get us to sit up and take notice.

The virgin, has a son, his name is "God with us". That's what Immanuel means. Most names in the bible have meanings.

Immanuel meanings God with us

Peter means rock

Jesus means Deliverer

John means God is gracious

The whole sign was about God being present. Now, the other week a young person asked if this passage actually was prophetic, was only prophetic and talked about Jesus or was it talking about a virgin birth back in Isaiah's time.

Good question. The answer – I can't be sure, but it is prophetic but it may have also been talking about a situation back then. God can make one situation have an impact on another, God can have an event have more than one meanings, or God can have one event have what they would call a fuller meaning. (In latin or theological speak it's called a *sensus plenior* or bigger or more complete meaning)

The other verse I want to look at actually quotes that verse. It comes from Matthew 1:23

Matthew 1:23 New International Version (NIV)

²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^[a] (which means "God with us").

If we look back at the previous verse we realise why it is put into Matthews writing.

Matthew 1:22 New International Version (NIV)

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

Now what we have here is the realization that God's plan goes further back than just the present. God's plan was evident in another situation. God spoke through a sign in Isaiah's time yet he had Jesus birth in mind.

God has a plan, it's not a haphazard world, or not like we perceive it to be. In Isaiah's time God's people were doing it tough, even being disobedient, yet God shows love but giving them a future. That future was through Jesus.

Now we remember God's presence, through the story of Jesus birth and His physical presence on earth and realise that God is interested in what is happening for us. He has a plan. God's presence for us goes further by the given of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be^[a] in you.

We are promised God's presence, no matter what is happening in life. Tough times like in Isaiah's time, or good times of blessing, struggles in life. God is present.

It is one thing for us to remember that one of the big presents of Christmas is God's presence in our life.